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23 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
24 FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
25 SAN FRANCISCO DIVISION

26 AMERICAN FEDERATION OF
27 GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO, et
28 al.,

Plaintiffs,

v.

DONALD J. TRUMP, in his official capacity
as President of the United States, et al.,

Defendants.

Case No. 3:25-cv-03698-SI

DECLARATION OF JOYCE HOWELL

DECLARATION OF JOYCE HOWELL

I, Joyce Howell, declare as follows:

1. I am over 18 years of age and competent to give this declaration. This declaration is based on my personal knowledge, information, and belief. I am providing this declaration in my capacity as a union executive.

2. I am an Attorney Advisor in the Office of Regional Counsel at the Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA" or "Agency") in Region 3. I began working at the EPA in 1993.

3. I am the Executive Vice President of the American Federation of Government Employees ("AFGE" or "Union") Council 238. I am also a member of American Federation of Government Employees Local 3631. EPA employees in Local 3631 protect human health and the environment in the states of Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia by stopping polluters from polluting, reviewing permits for the regulated communities, responding to environmental disasters and cleaning up the air, water and soil.

4. Council 238 represents a bargaining unit of more than 8,400 civil servants who work for the EPA. There are thirteen Locals in Council 238 across the country. These employees include attorneys, inspectors, On Scene Coordinators, Remedial Project managers, Toxicologists, Chemists, Public Affairs Specialists, and Permit Writers, among others. These bargaining unit members work across the country in regional offices, laboratories, field offices and headquarters. These employees protect human health and the environment through activities such as: monitoring of air and water quality; remediation of contaminated lands; conducting original research to evaluate impacts of human activity on human health and the environment; drafting environmental regulations; enforcing environmental statutes and regulations; overseeing state-delegated programs; managing grants and projects; and conducting legal review of proposed regulations and enforcement actions.

5. Council 238's mission is to advocate for and promote the interests of bargaining unit members in their federal employment, including working for a safe and fair workplace for all members. As the exclusive bargaining representative of these workers, the Union provides many services to all bargaining unit members. Core functions of the Union include collective bargaining

1 with the Agency to obtain a fair and reasonable collective bargaining agreement ("CBA"); filing
2 and negotiating grievances against the Agency to enforce the terms and conditions of the CBA;
3 pursuing arbitrations on behalf of workers to enforce the CBA; representing employees in EEO
4 matters, including reasonable accommodations, communicating to elected representatives, and
5 providing other support, guidance, and resources to bargaining unit employees.

6 6. The Union also files unfair labor practice charges; bargains with EPA when the
7 Agency issues new policies during the life of the CBA; represents employees in EEO matters,
8 including reasonable accommodation, harassment and prohibited employment practice matters;
9 provides training for members; communicates to elected representatives; renders assistance to
10 employees with employment records issues, such as clarifying veteran's preference standing, and
11 works closely with management to resolve employee problems

12 7. The Union first became aware of President Trump's plan to conduct "large-scale"
13 RIFs through the February 11, 2025 Executive Order. No one from the Agency had said anything
14 about large-scale RIFs to the union prior to that Order.

15 8. On February 26, 2025, President Trump was quoted in the press saying: "I spoke
16 with [EPA Administrator] Lee Zeldin, and he thinks he's going to be cutting 65 -- or so -- percent
17 of the people from environmental, and we're going to speed up the process too at the same time."
18 A true and correct copy of the February 26 news article is attached hereto as Exhibit A. A White
19 House official later told the press that the 65% referred to total spending cuts at the EPA,
20 including staffing cuts.

21 9. On March 11, 2025, Council 238 sent letters to the EPA requesting information
22 regarding the Agency's RIF and Reorganization Plan. Specifically, Council 238 requested all the
23 documents that were due to be provided to OPM under the RIF guidance OPM had sent to all
24 agencies. Council 238 requested the information no later than Friday, March 14, 2025, the day
25 after it was due to OPM. If the EPA had not provided the requested information to OPM, Council
26 238 requested "a copy of whatever information is sent in response to the request for the Agency's
27 RIF and Reorganization Plan." True and correct copies of these requests for information are
28 attached hereto as Exhibit B.

1 10. In addition, Council 238 submitted a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request
2 for “[a] copy of the Agency RIF and Reorganization Plan developed for and submitted to the
3 Office of Personnel Management and/or the Office of Management and Budget pursuant to the
4 OPM/OMB Guidance on RIF and Reorganization Plans dated February 26, 2025 or any partial
5 plans with regard to functions in support of a) environmental justice, also referred to as EJ, b)
6 diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) and c) the EPA Office of Research and
7 Development, also known as ORD.” Based on news reporting and information from Union
8 members, Council 238 anticipated that these particular functions of the EPA would be among the
9 first round of planned RIFs. A true and correct copy of that FOIA request is attached hereto as
10 Exhibit C.

11 11. Despite these efforts, the Union never received documents describing the specific
12 positions or offices that would be affected by the EPA’s RIF and Reorganization plan.

13 12. On April 21, 2025, the Union received three Memoranda providing notice that the
14 EPA was conducting a RIF of employees in the Office of Environmental Justice and External
15 Civil Rights, in Regional Environmental Justice Divisions, and in the Office of Inclusive
16 Excellence, and that the EPA was conducting a reorganization of the Environmental Justice
17 offices. True and correct copies of these memoranda are attached hereto as Exhibit D.

18 13. According to the Notices of Intent to Conduct a Reduction in Force, “[t]he decision
19 to conduct a RIF has been made pursuant to Executive Order 14151, *Ending Radical and Wasteful*
20 *Government DEI Programs and Preferencing* and Executive Order 14210, *Implementing The*
21 *President’s “Department of Government Efficiency” Workforce Optimization Initiative*, which
22 ‘commence[d] a critical transformation of the Federal bureaucracy’ and directed agencies to
23 ‘eliminat[e] waste, bloat, and insularity’ in order to ‘empower American families, workers,
24 taxpayers, and our system of Government itself.’” The Notice of Intent to Conduct a
25 Reorganization included nearly identical language, substituting “reorganization” for “RIF.”

26 14. The effective date of the Reorganization is June 29, 2025, with the effective date of
27 the RIF set for June 30, 2025. According to the Memoranda, “formal notices [will] be[] issued to
28 affected employees at least 30 days prior to the effective date, as required under Title 5 CFR and

1 allowed by OPM approval of EPA's request for an exception to the 60-day notice period provided
2 to employees selected for release through a RIF."

3 15. These initial RIFs will affect nearly 300 employees at the EPA, including
4 bargaining unit members in Council 238, who will lose their jobs, and along with it their income
5 and health care coverage for themselves and their families. The Restructuring will also eliminate
6 functions of the Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights (OEJECR), directly
7 threatening the health and safety of millions of people across the country.

8 16. OEJECR provides leadership on EPA's environmental justice and external civil
9 rights initiatives, and partners with other federal agencies and coregulators in state, tribal, and
10 local government, and communities. Environmental justice projects are designed to address the
11 disproportionate exposure to pollution and toxic sites experienced by low-income communities
12 and communities of color across the country. OEJECR provides resources and other technical
13 assistance, engages with communities, and provides support for community-led solutions to
14 environmental concerns, as well as enforcing federal civil rights laws, including Title VI of the
15 Civil Rights Act of 1964, that prohibit discrimination by applicants for and recipients of federal
16 financial assistance from EPA. Eliminating OEJECR stops that work and makes it more difficult
17 for the Agency to address environmental justice issues and enforce anti-discrimination statutes.

18 17. News reporting on the RIFs, including a New York Times article attached hereto as
19 Exhibit E, suggests that additional cuts will particularly affect employees of the Office of
20 Research and Development ("ORD"). Substantial cuts to ORD, or the elimination of the Office,
21 will significantly hamper all the work of the Agency. ORD conducts original research to guide
22 policy across the EPA. For example, ORD's research helps determine the levels of certain
23 substances in air or water that are considered safe and those that pose a danger to human health. It
24 is crucial for the work and policies of the EPA to be driven by science and research first, rather
25 than letting policy preferences dictate the science. But science cannot be the foundation for policy
26 decisions without the research conducted by ORD.

27 18. Layoffs of scientists and researchers at ORD will mean ongoing research projects
28 stop entirely, often losing years of work and data that would have to be restarted entirely for

1 meaningful results. Many research projects cannot be paused while preserving them for future
2 study if the staff or funding return. For example, in projects that rely on lab animals, the abrupt
3 termination of research will likely mean that those animals in will have to be euthanized.

4 19. The further staffing cuts of up to 65% of EPA employees will gut the Agency and
5 jeopardize all the work of the EPA to protect Americans from grave threats in our air, water and
6 land. The EPA is not a large agency relative to others in the federal government; it currently
7 employs roughly 17,000 people. Cuts of the size suggested by the President would render the
8 Agency incapable of carrying out many of its functions to keep Americans healthy and safe.

9 20. The EPA's work includes substantial support for states that will be threatened by
10 the deep cuts proposed to the Agency. Roughly one-third of the Agency's budget is passed
11 through to state programs, and the EPA provides training and support in addition to funds. Some
12 states have not set up their own permitting programs under the Clean Water Act, for example, and
13 instead rely on the EPA to directly manage those permits. For those states that do set up their own
14 programs, the EPA provides guidance and oversight, as well as additional enforcement to ensure
15 that polluters cannot take advantage of states with fewer resources to investigate and enforce the
16 laws. Cutting up to 65% of the EPA will leave many states entirely in the lurch, without either the
17 funds or the necessary technical staff to immediately replace the support they have been receiving
18 from the EPA.

19 21. Cuts to the EPA will also harm businesses that follow the law. In my experience,
20 almost all businesses seek to obey environmental rules and regulations. EPA enforcement against
21 those that violate the law helps to level the playing field and ensures that those businesses cannot
22 gain a competitive advantage over the law-abiding companies. Sweeping cuts at the EPA will
23 necessarily reduce the Agency's enforcement capabilities, hurting the businesses that choose to do
24 the right thing and protect the environment as required by law.

25 22. The EPA also provides critical support in response to natural disasters around the
26 country. In the wake of a natural disaster, there are often extensive hazards that require mitigation
27 by experts. Following floods, EPA staff are often required to stabilize hazardous waste from
28 sources such as household propane tanks or gas stations, and EPA scientists are required to test

1 and stabilize drinking water and sewage treatment systems. Following the recent fires in Southern
2 California, the EPA engaged in the largest lithium battery cleanup project in its history. In
3 providing this emergency response, EPA staff are drawn from all over the country to work in
4 shifts and get the work done as quickly as possible. Administrative support is also critical to this
5 work, as the transportation and scheduling must be carefully coordinated, and the teams on the
6 ground need frequent medical monitoring to ensure they stay safe while responding to
7 environmental disasters. The extensive RIFs planned for the EPA will hamstring this work,
8 putting EPA staff and Americans throughout the country in danger.

9 23. The planned reorganization and RIFs directly threaten the Union's ability to
10 provide core services to unit members and to accomplish its mission. Unit members face the loss
11 of their jobs and benefits, including health insurance. And Council 238 has been required to spend
12 its resources responding to the Reorganization and RIFs. Members and local unions are anxious
13 and scared for their jobs, and the Union is fielding a large number of questions and calls for
14 guidance. Council 238 has formed local RIF teams to handle this influx of questions and the
15 intakes that will come when the RIFs are fully implemented.

16 24. The Union's staff and activities are funded through members' voluntary dues. If
17 the Union no longer receives dues from the hundreds of members who are being laid off, that will
18 make it significantly more difficult for the Union to continue to function and to provide the
19 services and protection to bargaining units identified here.

20 25. Council 238 has participated in the notice and comment process for prior Agency
21 actions affecting the bargaining unit and its members. If the current RIF and Reorganization Plans
22 were published in the Federal Register for notice and comment, the Union would comment on
23 these plans because of their enormous impact on Council 238 members and their families, the
24 mission of EPA, and the ways in which statutory requirements will not be able to be met with the
25 drastically reduced staff.

1 I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States that the foregoing is
2 true and correct. Executed May 1, 2025, in Haddonfield, New Jersey.


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5 Joyce Howell
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Exhibit A



POLITICS

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Add Topic

'65 – or so – percent': Donald Trump says EPA administrator planning major cuts

**Zac Anderson**

USA TODAY

Published 3:45 p.m. ET Feb. 26, 2025 | Updated 6:34 p.m. ET Feb. 26, 2025

This story has been updated to add new information.

President [Donald Trump](#) signaled Wednesday that big cuts are coming at the Environmental Protection Agency, saying EPA administrator [Lee Zeldin](#) is contemplating a significant workforce reduction.

"I spoke with Lee Zeldin, and he thinks he's going to be cutting 65 – or so – percent of the people from environmental, and we're going to speed up the process too at the same time," Trump said during his first Cabinet meeting.

A White House official said Trump was referring to overall spending cuts at the EPA with the 65% number, and that will include staff cuts.

"Administrator Zeldin is committed to eliminating 65% of the EPA's wasteful spending," White House spokesperson Taylor Rogers said in a statement to USA TODAY.

The agency is tasked with safeguarding the environment and human health by enforcing federal clean air, water and land regulations, along with other environmental rules.

The EPA had 15,130 employees [in the 2024 fiscal year](#) and submitted [a budget in October](#) to increase the workforce by 2,023 employees "to continue rebuilding the Agency's core capacity to carry out its vital mission."

A major reduction of the EPA workforce could impact the agency's core functions. Sierra Club Executive Director Ben Jealous accused Trump and Zeldin of pushing a "sinister plan" that would harm public health and "increase the risk of deadly climate change-fueled weather events and natural disasters."

"Let's call this what it is: sabotage of the Environmental Protection Agency and the critical work it performs every day," Jealous said in a statement.

Trump has long said he wants to rollback environmental rules, with an eye toward the nation's energy industries. The president declared [when he announced](#) Zeldin as his choice for EPA administrator that he would "ensure fair and swift deregulatory decisions that will be enacted in a way to unleash the power of American businesses."

Zeldin said during his confirmation hearing that "We must ensure we are protecting the environment while also protecting our economy."

Trump mentioned Zeldin's job-cutting plans during a broader discussion Wednesday about the push by [Elon Musk](#) and the Department of Government Efficiency to dramatically reduce the federal workforce. Musk spoke during the Cabinet hearing about DOGE, which has received increasing pushback as it blitzes through federal agencies with [layoffs](#) and other spending cuts.

Trump said he's asking each federal agency do its own version of DOGE and trim spending.

"President Trump and EPA Administrator Zeldin are in lock step in creating a more efficient and effective federal government," the EPA said in a statement that added the agency will cut "wasteful grants" and look at "organizational improvements to the personnel structure."

Exhibit B



AFGE Council 238

Robert Coomber, Esq.
Senior Labor Advisor
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004
[REDACTED]@epa.gov

March 11, 2025

RE: Agency Response to OPM Memo dated February 26, 2025
Agency RIF and Reorganization Plan Request

Dear Mr. Coomber,

This is a request by the American Federation of Government Employees Council 238 (“Council 238” or “Union”) under 5 U.S.C. § 7114 (b)(4) and the AFGE/EPA Collective Bargaining Agreement (“CBA”) Article 3 Section 5.

It is necessary that AFGE receives the following information to provide representation to all bargaining unit employees, and as such Council 238 requests the Agency provide a copy of the following:

1. The list supplied by the Agency in response to the OMB/OPM request for:
Section IV. 1. A list of agency subcomponents or offices that provide direct services to citizens.
2. The statutes identified in response to the request to list:
Section IV. 2. Any statutes that establish the agency, or subcomponents of the agency, as statutorily required entities.
3. The components and employees identified in response to the request for:
Section IV. 3: All agency components and employees performing functions not mandated by statute or regulation who are not typically designated as essential during a lapse in appropriations (because the functions performed by such employees do not fall under an exception to the ADA) using the Agency Contingency Plans submitted to OMB in 2019.
4. The response to the question at Section IV. 4, including which agency subcomponents and/or functions were identified for elimination, consolidation or expansion.

5. In response to Section IV.5:
- a. the tools identified by the Agency in response to Section IV. 5.
 - b. the number of FTEs reduced, and any potential savings or costs associated with each action listed below in Fiscal Years 2025, 2026 and 2027 as identified in response to Section IV.5:
 - i. Continuation of the current hiring freeze.
 - ii. Regular attrition (e.g., retirement, movement between agencies and the private sector).
 - iii. Attrition through enhanced policies governing employee performance and conduct.
 - iv. Attrition through the termination or non-renewal of term or limited positions or reemployed annuitants.
 - v. Attrition achieved by RIFs, including the competitive areas and organizational components that the Agency has targeted or will target for initial RIFs, and the Agency's target for reductions in FTE positions via RIFs.
6. The Agency's response to Section IV.6. requesting a list by job position of all positions categorized as essential for purposes of exclusion from large-scale RIFs, including the number per each job position and total by agency and subcomponent.
7. The Agency's Section IV.8 requesting a timetable and plan for implementing each part of the Agency's Phase 1 ARRP.
8. The RIF timeline prepared in accordance with Appendix I of the OPM RIF and Reorganization Guidance Memo dated February 26, 2025, not otherwise provided in response to the above requests.

Since this information was due to be provided to OPM no later than March 13, 2025, Council 238 requests this information no later than Friday, March 14, 2025. In the alternative, if the above information has not been provided to OPM, provide a copy of whatever information is sent in response to the request for the Agency's RIF and Reorganization Plan.

If you have any questions or need clarification, please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED] or this email address.

Sincerely,



Marie Owens Powell
President
AFGE Council 238



cc: AFGE Council 238 LPs
AFGE General Counsel Office
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NAIL
ESC
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AFGE Council 238

Robert Coomber, Esq.
Senior Labor Advisor
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004
[REDACTED]@epa.gov

March 11, 2025

RE: Agency Response to OPM Memo dated February 6, 2025
“Request for Agency Performance Data”

Dear Mr. Coomber,

This is a request by the American Federation of Government Employees Council 238 (“Council 238” or “Union”) under 5 U.S.C. § 7114 (b)(4) and the AFGE/EPA Collective Bargaining Agreement (“CBA”) Article 3 Section 5.

It is necessary that AFGE receives the following information to provide representation to all bargaining unit employees, and as such Council 238 requests the Agency provide a copy of the following:

1. Provide a copy of the report sent to OPM which listed all employees who received less than a “fully successful” performance rating in the past three years.
2. Provide a copy of agency documents identified as responsive to the OPM’s request for:

Any OPM regulations, agency policies, or terms of collective bargaining agreements applicable to the agency that would impede: a. agency performance plans from making meaningful distinctions based on relative employee performance; or b. the agency’s ability to swiftly separate low-performing employees.¹

Since this information was due to be provided to OPM no later than March 7, 2025, Council 238 requests this information no later than Thursday, March 13, 2025.

¹ With respect to the reference to collective bargaining agreements contained in OPM’s request, AFGE is requesting only those terms of AFGE’s collective bargaining agreements.

■

If you have any questions or need clarification, please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED] or this email address.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. O. Powell", written over a light gray circular background.

Marie Owens Powell
President
AFGE Council 238

cc: AFGE Council 238 LPs
AFGE General Counsel Office
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Exhibit C



AFGE Council 238

AFGE Council 238 is submitting this request for records pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act. The records requested below include, but are not limited to, any typewritten or handwritten memoranda, reports, summaries, notes, charts, computer database materials, issuances, advisory letters, audio and/or video recordings, or other responsive data in whatever form it might appear.

1. A copy of the Agency RIF and Reorganization Plan developed for and submitted to the Office of Personnel Management and/or the Office of Management and Budget pursuant to the OPM/OMB Guidance on RIF and Reorganization Plans dated February 26, 2025 or any partial plans with regard to functions in support of a) environmental justice, also referred to as EJ, b) diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) and c) the EPA Office of Research and Development, also known as ORD.
2. As set forth in the Memorandum of Agreement between the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Office of Personnel Management dated February 21, 2025 (hereinafter "MOU"):
 - a. All communications between the OPM HRS project manager referred to in the MOU, Section IV.1, and EPA from February 21, 2025 to the date of the response;
 - b. The agendas, meeting invitations, and attendance rosters for each planning and project update meeting as described in the MOU, Section IV.1, first bullet, from February 21, 2025 to the date of the response;
 - c. Any materials distributed to the meeting attendees, meeting transcripts and presentation materials used in all such meetings and project updates as described in the MOU, Section IV.1, first bullet from February 21, 2025 to the date of the response;



- d. The timelines, deliverables, roles and responsibilities for all participants as described in the MOU, Section IV.1, second bullet.
- e. The reviews performed of all products as described in the MOU, Section IV.1, fifth bullet from February 21, 2025 to the date of the response;
- f. The documents and information produced by OPM necessary to administer the MOU, as described in the MOU, Section IV.1, sixth bullet.
- g. Communications with key experts within OPM as described in the MOU, Section IV.1, seventh bullet, from February 21, 2025 to the date of the response.
- h. Status reports and financial updates provided to EPA as described in the MOU, Section IV.1, eighth bullet from February 21, 2025 to the date of the response.
- i. Documentation of Ground Rules, Competitive Area and RIF Effective Date as described in the MOU, Section IV.2, first bullet.
- j. Documentation describing RIF procedures and RIF-alternative strategies as described in MOU, Section IV.2, second bullet.
- k. Review of the AFGE Collective Bargaining Agreement as described in MOU, Section IV.2, third bullet.
- l. The pre-event assessment of employee and position data inputs as described in MOU, Section IV.2, fourth bullet.
- m. The event action plan, communication plan and timeline as described in MOU, Section IV.2, fifth bullet.

3. Provide a copy of the report sent to OPM identified as responsive to the OPM February 26, 2025 Request for Agency Performance Data which listed all employees who received less than a “fully successful” performance rating in the past three years.

■

4. Provide a copy of agency documents identified as responsive to the OPM February 26, 2025 Request for Agency Performance Data: Any OPM regulations, agency policies, or terms of collective bargaining agreements applicable to the agency that would impede: a. agency performance plans from making meaningful distinctions based on relative employee performance; or b. the agency's ability to swiftly separate low-performing employees, which listed all employees who received less than a "fully successful" performance rating in the past three years.

Please direct all response to [REDACTED]@afge3632.org.

Thank you.

Joyce Howell
Executive Vice President
AFGE Council 238

Exhibit D



OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

April 21, 2025

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Notice of Intent to Conduct a Reorganization

FROM: Travis Voyles, Assistant Deputy Administrator

TO: Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights
Regional Environmental Justice Divisions

This notice is to inform you that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will be conducting a reorganization. The reorganization will utilize regular restructuring procedures as well as Transfer of Function, in accordance with the Office of Personnel Management Workforce Reshaping Handbook and Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

The decision to conduct a reorganization has been made pursuant to Executive Order 14151, *Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing* and Executive Order 14210, *Implementing The President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative*, which "commence[d] a critical transformation of the Federal bureaucracy" and directed agencies to "eliminat[e] waste, bloat, and insularity" in order to "empower American families, workers, taxpayers, and our system of Government itself."

This action is necessary to align our workforce with the Agency's current and future needs and to ensure the efficient and effective operation of our programs. With this action, EPA is delivering organizational improvements to the personnel structure that will directly benefit the American people and better advance the Agency's core mission of protecting human health and the environment.

Effective Date

The Transfer of Function reorganization will take effect on June 29, 2025.

Next Steps

EPA provides employees with an Employee Assistance Program. EAP provides confidential counseling and referral services to assist employees in resolving personal or work-related problems. Participation is voluntary, and the program is strictly confidential. If you believe these services would be appropriate for your situation or would like more information on EAP services, you may visit

<https://intranet.epa.gov/ohr/benefits/eap/index.htm>. The website and mobile app password is [REDACTED]. If you are not able to access the EPA intranet, you may call 1 (888) 635-3202, visit the [Acentra Health](#) website or download the Acentra Health app from Apple Store or Google Play. The website and mobile app password is [REDACTED].

President Trump was elected with a mandate from the American people. Part of this mandate includes the issuance of an Executive Order that directs the critical transformation of the Federal bureaucracy to empower American families, workers, taxpayers and our system of government itself. Under the Trump Administration, EPA is affirming our commitment to serve every American and advance the Agency's core mission of protecting human health and the environment.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation during this time.



OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

April 21, 2025

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Notice of Intent to Conduct a Reduction in Force

FROM: Travis Voyles, Assistant Deputy Administrator

TO: Office of Inclusive Excellence, Immediate Office
Employees of the OIE Inclusion, Policy, Accountability and Communication Division

This notice is to inform you that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will be conducting a Reduction in Force in accordance with the Office of Personnel Management Workforce Reshaping Handbook and Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations governing RIF procedures.

The decision to conduct a RIF has been made pursuant to Executive Order 14151, *Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing* and Executive Order 14210, *Implementing The President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative*, which "commence[d] a critical transformation of the Federal bureaucracy" and directed agencies to "eliminat[e] waste, bloat, and insularity" in order to "empower American families, workers, taxpayers, and our system of Government itself."

This action is necessary to align our workforce with the Agency's current and future needs and to ensure the efficient and effective operation of our programs. With this action, EPA is delivering organizational improvements to the personnel structure that will directly benefit the American people and better advance the Agency's core mission of protecting human health and the environment.

Effective Date

The RIF will take effect on June 30, 2025, with formal notices being issued to affected employees at least 30 days prior to the effective date, as required under Title 5 CFR and allowed by OPM approval of EPA's request for an exception to the 60-day notice period provided to employees selected for release through a RIF.

Employee Rights and Support

We understand that this announcement may cause concern and uncertainty. Please be assured that we are committed to supporting all affected employees throughout this process. Below are key points regarding your rights and the support available to you:

- 1. Competitive Areas and Levels**

The RIF will be conducted within defined competitive areas and levels, in accordance with Title 5 CFR 351.402 and 351.403.

- 2. Retention Standing**

Employees will be ranked on a retention register based on tenure, veterans' preference, length of service and performance ratings, as outlined in Title 5 CFR 351.501.

- 3. Appeal Rights**

Employees who receive a RIF notice have the right to appeal the decision to the Merit Systems Protection Board or file a grievance under any applicable negotiated grievance procedure.

- 4. Placement Assistance**

We will provide information on how you can receive career transition assistance, including resume workshops, career counseling and job search resources. Additionally, we will coordinate with other Federal agencies to explore placement opportunities.

Next Steps

Our priority is to ensure a fair and transparent process while providing the necessary support to those affected. You will be invited to attend informational meetings to gain further details about the RIF process, benefits and state-specific career transition assistance.

EPA provides employees with an Employee Assistance Program. EAP provides confidential counseling and referral services to assist employees in resolving personal or work-related problems. Participation is voluntary, and the program is strictly confidential. If you believe these services would be appropriate for your situation or would like more information on EAP services, you may visit

<https://intranet.epa.gov/ohr/benefits/eap/index.htm>. The website and mobile app password is [REDACTED]. If you are not able to access the EPA intranet, you may call 1 (888) 635-3202, visit the [Acentra Health](#) website or download the Acentra Health app from Apple Store or Google Play. The website and mobile app password is [REDACTED].

President Trump was elected with a mandate from the American people. Part of this mandate includes the issuance of an Executive Order that directs the critical transformation of the Federal bureaucracy to empower American families, workers, taxpayers and our system of government itself. Under the Trump Administration, EPA is affirming our commitment to serve every American and advance the Agency's core mission of protecting human health and the environment.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation during this time.



OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

April 21, 2025

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Notice of Intent to Conduct a Reduction in Force

FROM: Travis Voyles, Assistant Deputy Administrator

TO: Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights
Regional Environmental Justice Divisions

This notice is to inform you that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will be conducting a Reduction in Force in accordance with the Office of Personnel Management Workforce Reshaping Handbook and Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations governing RIF procedures.

The decision to conduct a RIF has been made pursuant to Executive Order 14151, *Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing* and Executive Order 14210, *Implementing The President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative*, which "commence[d] a critical transformation of the Federal bureaucracy" and directed agencies to "eliminat[e] waste, bloat, and insularity" in order to "empower American families, workers, taxpayers, and our system of Government itself."

This action is necessary to align our workforce with the Agency's current and future needs and to ensure the efficient and effective operation of our programs. With this action, EPA is delivering organizational improvements to the personnel structure that will directly benefit the American people and better advance the Agency's core mission of protecting human health and the environment.

Effective Date

The RIF will take effect on July 31, 2025, with formal notices being issued to affected employees at least 30 days prior to the effective date, as required under Title 5 CFR and allowed by OPM approval of EPA's request for an exception to the 60-day notice period provided to employees selected for release through a RIF.

Employee Rights and Support

We understand that this announcement may cause concern and uncertainty. Please be assured that we are committed to supporting all affected employees throughout this process. Below are key points regarding your rights and the support available to you:

- 1. Competitive Areas and Levels**

The RIF will be conducted within defined competitive areas and levels, in accordance with Title 5 CFR §§351.402 and 351.403.

- 2. Retention Standing**

Employees will be ranked on a retention register based on tenure, veterans' preference, length of service and performance ratings, as outlined in Title 5 CFR §351.501.

- 3. Appeal Rights**

Employees who receive a RIF notice have the right to appeal the decision to the Merit Systems Protection Board or file a grievance under any applicable negotiated grievance procedure.

- 4. Placement Assistance**

We will provide information on how you can receive career transition assistance, including resume workshops, career counseling and job search resources. Additionally, we will coordinate with other Federal agencies to explore placement opportunities.

Next Steps

Our priority is to ensure a fair and transparent process while providing the necessary support to those affected. You will be invited to attend informational meetings to gain further details about the RIF process, benefits and state-specific career transition assistance.

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Exhibit E

Trump Administration Aims to Eliminate E.P.A.'s Scientific Research Arm

More than 1,000 chemists, biologists and other scientists could be laid off under a plan to dismantle the Office of Research and Development.



By Lisa Friedman

March 17, 2025

The Environmental Protection Agency plans to eliminate its scientific research arm, firing as many as 1,155 chemists, biologists, toxicologists and other scientists, according to documents reviewed by Democrats on the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology.

The strategy is part of large-scale layoffs, known as a “reduction in force,” being planned by the Trump administration, which is intent on shrinking the federal work force. Lee Zeldin, the administrator of the E.P.A., has said he wants to eliminate 65 percent of the agency’s budget. That would be a drastic reduction — one that experts said could hamper clean water and wastewater improvements, air quality monitoring, the cleanup of toxic industrial sites, and other parts of the agency’s mission.

The E.P.A.’s plan, which was presented to White House officials on Friday for review, calls for dissolving the agency’s largest department, the Office of Research and Development, and purging up to 75 percent of the people who work there.

The remaining staff members would be placed elsewhere within the E.P.A. “to provide increased oversight and align with administration priorities,” according to the language shared with The New York Times by staff members who work for Democrats on the House science committee.

Molly Vaseliou, a spokeswoman for the E.P.A., said in a statement that the agency “is taking exciting steps as we enter the next phase of organizational improvements” and stressed that changes had not been finalized.

“We are committed to enhancing our ability to deliver clean air, water and land for all Americans,” she said, adding, “While no decisions have been made yet, we are actively listening to employees at all levels to gather ideas on how to increase efficiency and ensure the E.P.A. is as up to date and effective as ever.”

Representative Zoe Lofgren, Democrat of California, said that the Office of Research and Development was created by congressional statute and that dissolving it would be illegal. Julia Nikhinson for The New York Times

Representative Zoe Lofgren of California, the top Democrat on the science committee, said that without the Office of Research and Development, the E.P.A. would not be able to meet its legal obligation to use the “best available science” when writing regulations and considering policy. She also said that the office was created by congressional statute and that dissolving it would be illegal.

“Every decision E.P.A. makes must be in furtherance of protecting human health and the environment, and that just can’t happen if you gut E.P.A. science,” Ms. Lofgren said in a statement. She said that the first Trump administration had weakened the agency’s scientific research in order to relax regulations against polluting industries. “Now this is their attempt to kill it for good,” she said.

The E.P.A.’s science office provides the independent research that undergirds virtually all of the agency’s environmental policies, from analyzing the risks of “forever chemicals” in drinking water to determining the best way to reduce fine particle pollution in the atmosphere. It has researched synthetic playground material made from discarded tires; found that hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, can contaminate drinking water; and measured the impact of wildfire smoke on public health. The office also helps state environmental agencies figure out how to address algae blooms, treat drinking water and

more.

Its findings tend to support stronger regulations to protect against exposure to air pollution, hazardous chemicals and climate change. And that has made it a target of many industries. Eliminating the office would serve the Trump administration's dual goals of reducing the size of government while potentially easing the regulation of the chemical and fossil fuel industries.

The science office was also criticized by Project 2025, a blueprint for overhauling the federal government that was produced by the Heritage Foundation and written by many who are serving in the Trump administration.

The chapter on the E.P.A. accuses the science office of being "precautionary, bloated, unaccountable, closed, outcome-driven, hostile to public and legislative input, and inclined to pursue political rather than purely scientific goals."

It calls for eliminating programs within the science office, in particular the Integrated Risk Information System, which evaluates the human health effects of exposure to toxic chemicals and uses that information to form the basis for restrictions on their use. Industries regulated by the E.P.A. often push back against that research. A bill introduced by Senator John Kennedy, Republican of Louisiana, and backed by industry groups seeks to prevent the E.P.A. from using the research.

"It is an assault on science," said Jennifer Orme-Zavaleta, who ran the E.P.A. office under the first Trump administration.

Lee Zeldin, the administrator of the E.P.A., in Altadena, Calif., last month. He has said he wants to eliminate 65 percent of the E.P.A.'s budget. Mark Abramson for The New York Times

Shuttering the office would cost jobs across the country, particularly in places like North Carolina and Ada, Okla., two of the places where the agency operates major research labs, she said. In addition to chemists and biologists, the science office also employs physicians, nurses, hydrologists and experts who focus on plants, soils and wetlands.

Chris Frey, who led the Office of Research and Development under the Biden administration, said eliminating it would create a vacuum that would allow an administration to impose any policies it wanted to.

"It's certainly convenient for certain stakeholders to have O.R.D. silenced," Mr. Frey said.

The American Chemistry Council, which represents chemical manufacturers, said in a statement that it supported the E.P.A.'s having the "resources, technical staff and subject matter expertise needed for the agency to meet its statutory requirements."

More than 40 former E.P.A. officials who served in Republican and Democratic administrations plan to send a letter on Tuesday to Mr. Zeldin warning that steep cuts will render the agency unable to meet its mission.

"Policy changes are to be expected from one administration to the next, but not the dismantling of E.P.A.," the officials wrote in the letter, a copy of which was obtained by

The Times. “If the administration does not agree with the laws Congress has passed and the programs it has funded, it should work with Congress to seek changes, not unilaterally and recklessly freeze, delay or eliminate funding.”

Hiroko Tabuchi contributed reporting from New York.

Lisa Friedman is a Times reporter who writes about how governments are addressing climate change and the effects of those policies on communities.